

שבת

The first *Parashah* that we read this week describes the service that the *Kohen Gadol* performed on *Yom Kippur* in order to atone for the Jewish People. Why was Aharon chosen for this role? R' Meshulam Feish Segal Lowy z"l (1921-2015; the *Tosher Rebbe* in post-War Hungary and Montreal, Canada) writes: Aharon was chosen because he always busied himself with making peace between friends, or between husbands and wives, who experienced difficulties in their relationships. It is in the merit of the resulting unity that the Jewish People are able to achieve true purification on *Yom Kippur*. The power of unity is so strong that even if an individual has no personal merit, he merits to be purified along with the Jewish People so long as he views himself as part of them.

The *Tosher Rebbe* continues: The second *Parashah* that we read this week begins: "Speak to the entire assembly of *Bnei Yisrael* and say to them, 'You shall be holy . . .'" R' Avraham Yehoshua Heschel z"l (1748-1825; the *Apter Rov*, also known as the "*Ohev Yisrael*") notes that this *Parashah* was spoken to the "entire assembly," and he writes: There are many upstanding people who, nevertheless, cannot attain the status of "*Kedoshim*" / "holy people" on their own. As part of the "entire assembly," however, even they can become *Kedoshim*. Perhaps for this reason, continues the *Tosher Rebbe*, *Parashat Kedoshim* contains many *Mitzvot Bein Adam La'chavero* / between man and his fellow, for only by observing them can a person be part of the entire assembly. (*Avodat Avodah*)

## Shabbat

In the poem "*Shalom Aleichem*" recited upon arriving home on Friday night, the final stanza begins, "May you depart in peace." Many wonder: Why do we bid the angels farewell when they just arrived?

R' Shemaryah Shmeril Brandriss z"l (rabbi of Hrymailiv, Ukraine; died 1857) writes: Many people do not say this stanza at all. Still others emend it so that it means, "When you depart, may it be in peace." (This is accomplished in Hebrew simply by adding the letter "*Bet*" before the first word.) However, R' Brandriss writes, the text as we have it can be explained in light of the commentary of R' Moshe Alsheich z"l (1508-1593; Tzefat, *Eretz Yisrael*) on the verse (*Bereishit* 28:12--part of Yaakov's dream when he fled from his parents' home), "Behold! Angels of *Elokim* were ascending and descending on it." *Rashi* z"l explains that since Yaakov was leaving the Holy Land, the angels who accompanied him in *Eretz Yisrael* first ascended to Heaven, then the angels who would accompany him in the Diaspora descended. However, R' Alsheich notes, when Yaakov returned to *Eretz Yisrael*, the *Eretz Yisrael*-angels came to meet him even before the Diaspora-angels departed. When one is going towards holiness, the holier angels come to meet him.

Similarly, R' Brandriss writes, when we enter *Shabbat*, the Holy Day's angels come to meet us before the weekday angels depart. To the *Shabbat*-angels we say, "*Shalom Aleichem*," "Come in peace," and "Bless me for peace." Then, we say to the weekday angels, "May you depart in peace."

(*Kuntreis Iyun Tefilah*)

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**“You shall love your fellow as yourself--I am Hashem.” (19:18)**

R' Yitzchak Arieli z"l (1896-1974; *Mashgiach* of Yeshivat Mercaz Harav) asks: We read (*Devarim* 6:5), “You shall love Hashem, your Elokim, with all your heart.” If one is obligated to give his entire heart to Hashem, how can he have room in his heart to love another person?

R' Arieli answers: In fact, love of one's fellow Jews and love of Hashem are one and the same. Thus our Sages teach (*Tosefta Shevuot* 3:5), “A person does not betray his fellow unless he first betrays G-d.”

How does one acquire the ability to love Hashem and man? By learning Torah “*Lishmah*” (literally, “for its own sake”), R' Arieli writes. He explains: Learning Torah *Lishmah* means learning in a way that connects the Torah to the Giver of the Torah--not for one's own satisfaction. When one learns Torah *Lishmah*, he senses that he is tapping into the Torah's soul, into its inner essence, and that a bright light is enlightening him, even though, for now, he has covered relatively little ground and has much to learn.

The *Gemara* (*Nedarim* 81a, as explained by the classical commentaries) teaches that *Eretz Yisrael* was lost because Torah was not studied *Lishmah*. It follows, then, that studying Torah *Lishmah* strengthens the Jewish People in their Land. It is not the quantity of Torah studied that has this impact, but its quality, R' Arieli writes.

He continues: In light of this, we can understand the sin of the students of Rabbi Akiva. The *Gemara* (*Yevamot* 62b) relates that Rabbi Akiva had twelve thousand pairs of students, and they all died within a short period because they did not honor each other. Their deaths, says the *Gemara*, left the world desolate. R' Arieli writes: The *Gemara* emphasizes that they studied in pairs, because studying Torah with a partner rather than alone is the way to succeed in one's studies, which they did. Indeed, these students' vast knowledge is highlighted by the fact that their deaths left the world desolate of Torah. And, of course, they had the finest teacher--Rabbi Akiva, who our Sages compare favorably with Moshe Rabbeinu.

What went wrong? The *Talmud Yerushalmi* (*Nedarim* 9:4) records: Rabbi Akiva, the same sage who taught these twelve thousand pairs of students, said, “You shall love your fellow as yourself--This is a major principle of the Torah.” As noted, one acquires the ability to love Hashem and one's fellow Jew by studying Torah *Lishmah*. When one studies *Lishmah*, his goal is to help his fellow students, to reach the ultimate goal of sanctifying Hashem's Name together. Not so if one learns Torah solely to further his own spiritual growth; that leads to trying to prove one's superiority over his fellow students. Thus Rabbi Elazar ben Shamua, who became Rabbi Akiva's student after this tragedy, emphasizes (*Avot* 4:15), “Your friend's honor should be as great as your awe of your teacher.”

(*Enayim La'mishpat: Makkot*, Introduction)

**“You shall safeguard My charge not to do any of the abominable traditions that were done before you and not contaminate yourselves through them--I am Hashem, your Elokim.” (18:30)**

The *Gemara* (*Yevamot* 21a) teaches: “You shall safeguard My charge--Make a safeguard around My safeguard.”

Rabbeinu Yonah Gerondi z"l (1210-1263; Spain) writes: The decrees of the Rabbis and the boundaries they drew for us are the foundation of reverence for G-d, because they distance us from transgressing Hashem's Torah. Without those decrees, we might trample the entire Torah. Conversely, the reward for observing these decrees is very great, as we read (*Tehilim* 19:12), “Even Your servant is careful of them, for in observing them there is great reward.”

(*Sha'arei Teshuvah* 3:7)

**“You shall rebuke your fellow.” (19:17)**

R' Gershon Edelstein z"l (1923-2023; Rosh Yeshiva of the Ponovezh Yeshiva) writes: *Tochachah* / rebuke can be successful only among friends. If Reuven comes to Shimon (both names are hypothetical) as a friend and explains that he is giving Shimon good advice for Shimon's own well-being, that doing such-and-such is not in Shimon's best interests, that *Tochachah* can make an impact and be accepted. If a person is unable to speak gently, he is exempt from the *Mitzah* of giving *Tochachah*, R' Edelstein quotes from R' Chaim of Volozhin z"l (Belarus; 1749-1821).

(*Peninei Chizuk Al Sha'arei Teshuvah* p.54)

**“You shall not take revenge and you shall not bear a grudge against the members of your people . . .” (19:18)**

Rabbeinu Nissim ben Reuven Gerondi z"l (Spain; 1320-1376) asks: Is not Hashem described as “a jealous and vengeful G-d”? He explains:

When Hashem rebukes us for our sins, He does so as a father would. Firstly, a father does not punish a child as harshly as the child's wrongdoing deserves. Secondly, the punishment by a father is not administered for the father's personal satisfaction, but rather for the child's benefit. The same two points are true when Hashem's punishes us, R' Nissim writes.

Why, then, is Hashem described as “jealous and vengeful”? R' Nissim explains: The prophet is describing the good that comes from Hashem's manner of relating to us--He appears to be vengeful in order to direct us back to the correct path.

R' Nissim adds: The foregoing explanation accounts for punishments administered in this world. In *Olam Ha'ba* / the World-to-Come, however, it will be too late to direct a person back to the correct path. Why, then, will a person be punished in *Olam Ha'ba* for the sins he commits in this world? R' Nissim answers: “Punishments” in *Olam Ha'ba* are simply the natural outcome of one's sins in this world, just like pain that comes naturally if a person does something destructive to his body. (*Derashot Ha'Ran* #10)